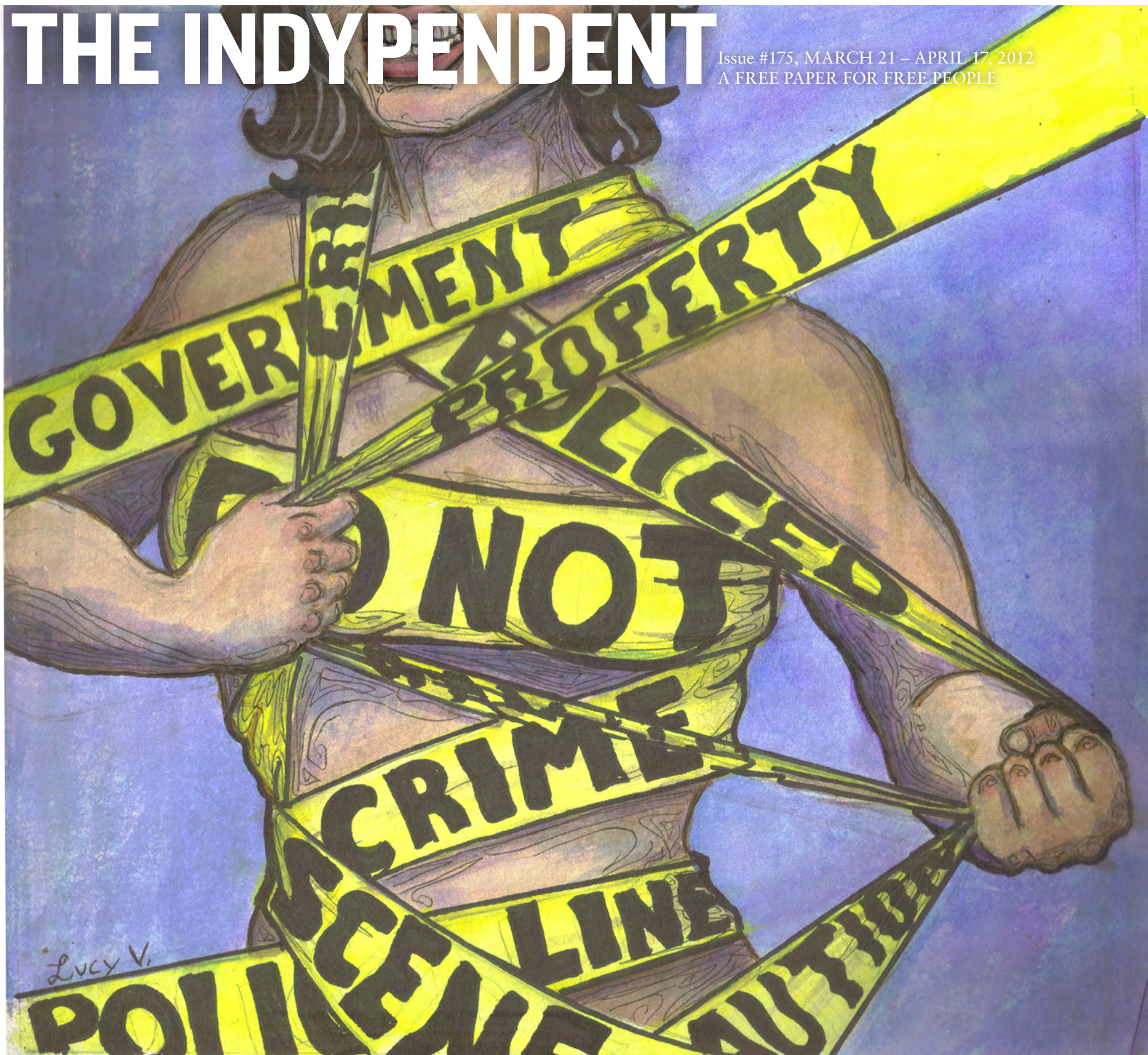


RADICAL WOMEN RISING, p6-12

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #175, MARCH 21 – APRIL 17, 2012
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE



LUCY VALKURY



indypendent.org



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The Indypendent is a New York-based free newspaper published 13 times a year on Mondays for our print and on-line readership of more than 100,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 700 journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Indypendent* is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. *The Indypendent* reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

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community calendar

SUBMIT YOUR EVENTS AT INDY-
EVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

TUE MAR 27
6:30pm • Free
WORKSHOP: WOMEN/TRANS REPAIR
CLASS: WHEELS, SPOKES, TIMES UP!
Come learn the basics of bicycle repair from female mechanics at our workshop designed by and for women. From brake and gears to derailleur and brake cables, rebuilding cup and cone bottom brackets, hubs and headsets, learn how to fix them all.
99 S 6th St, Bklyn
xupbicyclecoop@gmail.com • times-up.org

6:15-7:30pm • Free
INFO SESSION: CUNY LABOR STUDIES PROGRAM. Established in collaboration with NYC labor unions and CUNY, the Murphy Institute offers educational opportunities to union members and serves as an academic resource on issues of concern to the labor movement.
The Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies, 25 W 43rd St, 19 Fl
RSVP 212-642-2055
laurie.kellogg@mail.cuny.edu

THU MAR 29 - SUN APR 1
Various times • \$35
CONFERENCE: NATIONAL BLACK WRITERS. This year's conference will provide writers, scholars, literary professionals, students and the general public with a forum for engaging in dynamic and spirited conversations, panel discussions, readings, workshops and performances on themes related to migration, cultural memory, popular culture and the natural environment.
Medgar Evers College
CUNY 1650 Bedford Ave, Bklyn
718-270-4811
nationalblackwritersconference.org

SAT MAR 31
12-3pm • FREE
RALLY: CATALYST FOR CHANGE WHEN WOMEN PURSUE JUSTICE. While OWS ushered a new layer of activists into the struggle, more grassroots solidarity is needed to welcome women, especially those facing racism, poverty, sexism and homophobia.
Meet at noon at the Bull then march to Solidarity Center, 55 W 17th St, 5th Fl
iacenter.org

MON APR 2
7pm • Free
TALK: BOMBS VERSUS BUDGETS: THE FUTURE OF MILITARY SPENDING. The deficit reduction fever sweeping Washington could force the first real reductions in Pentagon

spending in over a decade, but companies like Boeing and Lockheed Martin are fighting to keep that from happening. Is this a short-term battle or an historic turning point for defense spending?
The New School 66 W 12th St, 7th Fl
RSVP 212-229-5353 • newschool.edu

TUE APR 3
6:30pm • \$10
SCREENING: *BROTHER OUTSIDER* — *LIFE OF BAYARD RUSTIN*. Come celebrate the legacy of Bayard Rustin and watch this acclaimed documentary by Bennett Singer and Nancy Kates. Followed by a conversation with Walter Naegle, surviving partner of Bayard Rustin, and editor Michael Long.
The LGBT Center, 208 W 13th St
212-620-7310 • gaycenter.org

THU APR 5
7pm • \$5 Sugg
OPENING: BLUESTOCKINGS' "PRISONER ART SHOW." Features original artwork by prisoners from penitentiaries across the United States. Performers, speakers and refreshments come together in a night of art and prisoner activism.
Bluestockings 172 Allen St
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

7-9pm • FREE
BOOK LAUNCH: *BEAUTIFUL TROUBLE*. Devoted to revolutionary pranktivism, Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell present their guide to creative protest.
powerHouse Arena 37 Main St, Bklyn
718-666-3049 • powerhousearena.com

TUE APR 17
7:30pm • \$20-\$100
CONCERT: PETE SEEGER'S "VOICES OF HOPE." In a benefit for the Justice for Farmworkers Campaign, Emma's Revolution will join Pete Seeger to raise funds for Rural & Migrant Ministry, the home of the Justice for Farmworkers campaign that continues the decade-long fight for farmworker safety and labor rights in New York.
Riverside Church, 490 Riverside Dr
RSVP 212-870-6700 • ruralmigrantministry.org

SUN APR 22
1:20-3:30pm • \$5-\$8
EVENT: EARTH DAY 2012. Celebrate at the Staten Island Zoo. Stop by an Education Station and learn about composting and how you can do it in your own home. Crafts, activities and animal encounters available for all ages.

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DC 37 Headquarters
125 Barclay St.

Bluestockings
172 Allen St.

LES People's Federal Credit Union
39 Avenue B

Housing Works
126 Crosby St.

Hudson Park Library
66 Leroy St.

Seward Park Library
192 E. Broadway at Jefferson St.

Whole Earth Bakery
130 St. Mark's Pl.

Mamoun's Falafel Restaurant
22 St. Mark's Pl.

Brecht Forum
451 West St.

Shakespeare & Co.
716 Broadway at Washington Pl.

Theater for the New City
155 First Ave.

14TH TO 96TH ST.
Epiphany Library
228 E. 23rd St.

Chelsea Square Restaurant
W. 23rd St. & 9th Ave.

Manhattan Neighborhood Network
537 W. 59th St.

Muhlenberg Library
209 W. 23rd St.

St. Agnes Library
444 Amsterdam Ave. (btwn W. 81st and 82nd Sts.)

ABOVE 96TH ST.

George Bruce Library
518 W. 125th St.

Book Culture
526 W. 112th St.

Morningside Heights Library
2900 Broadway

Harlem Library
9 W. 124th St.

Trufa Restaurant
140th St. & Broadway

Hamilton Grange Library
503 W. 145th St.

Uptown Sister's Books
W. 156th St. & Amsterdam

MAR-APR

UPCOMING EVENTS

MON MARCH 26 • 7:30pm
FILM SCREENING & DISCUSSION: *AUDRE LORDE — THE BERLIN YEARS, 1984-1992*.
Join director Dagmar Schultz, poet Ika Hugel Marshall and Afro-German scholar and Professor Tina Campt for a discussion of this film, which explores a little-known period in Lorde's prolific life in which she helped ignite the Afro-German Movement.
Sliding scale: \$6/\$10/\$15

TUE MARCH 27 • 7pm
DISCUSSION: AFTER 1989: RACE AFTER MULTICULTURALISM.
Join the Asian American Writers' Workshop for an alternative racial history of the 1990s, entitled "I Love the 90s!" Panelists include Sophia Chang, Carolina Gonzalez and Vijay Prashad.
Sliding scale: \$6

SAT APRIL 7 • 12-6pm
WORKSHOP: CUTTING IT UP.
Writer/director Julia Lee Barclay will show participants how to break down both the basic elements of how we communicate with each other and the (mostly unspoken/hidden) rules which govern that communication. Sponsored by Theater of the Oppressed Laboratory.
Sliding scale: \$35-\$65

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THAT MOVES
451 West Street
(btwn Bank and Bethune)

Please
register online:
brechtforum.org
212-242-4201

Staten Island Zoo
614 Broadway, Staten Island
718-442-3100 • statenislandzoo.org

3pm • Free
FAIR: NATIONAL GRID EARTH DAY CELEBRATION. Interactive family activities, educational materials, give-away items and items for sale will highlight the need for conserving energy, recycling in the home, and having a heightened awareness of the global environmental issues that we face today.
Brooklyn College Campus, Brooklyn Center for Performing Arts, next to Walt Whitman Theater • brooklyncenter.com

Various times • Free
EVENT: FAIR: EARTH DAY NEW YORK 2012. Celebrate indoors at Grand Central Station, or outdoors on Vanderbilt Ave or Times Square and enjoy environmental exhibits, live music, children's activities and a car show.
212-922-0165 • earthdayny.org

SAT APR 28
12-5pm • Free
CONFERENCE: EIGHTH ANNUAL BROOKLYN PEACE FAIR: ENDING WAR, PROMOTING PEACE. Through workshops on current events, music, arts activities, discussion groups, video presentations, information tables and performances, we encourage all to develop a vision of a country where all people can enjoy their human and civil rights and lead lives of dignity and fulfillment. Guest speakers include investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill and Iraq War Veteran Capt. Paul Chappell.
Brooklyn College, Hillel Place at Campus Rd
718-684-5921 • brooklynpeace.org

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Sisters' Community Hardware
900 Fulton St.

Pacific Street Library
25 Fourth Ave.

Outpost Café
1014 Fulton St.

Blackbird Café
197 Bedford Ave.

'sNice Café
315 Fifth Ave.

High Bridge Library
78 168th St. & Woodcrest Ave.

Bedford Library
496 Franklin Ave.

Parkside Deli
203 Parkside Ave.

BRONX
Brook Park
141st St. & Brook Ave.

Mott Haven Library
321 E. 140th St.

High Bridge Library
78 W. 168th St.

Mi Casa Bakery
18 E. Bedford Park Blvd.

STATEN ISLAND
St. George Library Center
5 Central Ave.

Port Richmond Library
75 Bennett St.

Everything Goes Book Café
208 Bay St.

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Strand Up For Your Rights

BOOK WORKERS DEFEND THEIR JOBS AND A MANHATTAN INSTITUTION

BY ARI PAUL

Chris McCallion is a little on edge. He and other workers at the Strand Bookstore had contacted reporters hours earlier on March 15, going public with the rank-and-file anger about the owner's new contract demands, which include an inferior wage tier for new workers, higher healthcare premiums and fewer days off. Store management has received a handful of media calls already, and McCallion, an employee since 2010, expects he'll take some heat for speaking out.

The Strand, on the corner of Broadway and 12th Street and founded in 1927, is a book-lovers bookstore. In an age when even corporate monoliths like Borders have imploded and Barnes & Noble relies on the Nook to keep its doors open, the Strand, with its legendary 18 miles of books, remains the place where you can trip over new translations of Tolstoy or volumes on the Spanish Civil War. It is a retail establishment with a mostly full-time workforce, about 150 of whom are unionized (plus nearly 50 non-union managers and probationary workers) and have healthcare benefits. This renowned institution, which owns the building and takes in rent money, is still thriving, according to an interview with co-owner Nancy Bass Wyden in *The Daily Beast*.

McCallion is part of a shop-floor organization that has grown frustrated with the company's demands for deep employee benefit cuts and workplace restructuring ever since Nancy Bass Wyden started to take over more day-to-day business duties from her father and co-owner Fred Bass, who is 83. In addition to the contract demands, which would constitute a wage cut, management has taken a divide-and-conquer approach to workers. Older workers were offered a buyout, which many took. A warehouse space has been moved from the Union Square location to Brooklyn, inspiring some of those workers to find employment elsewhere, McCallion said.

And instead of managers being promot-

ed from the bargaining unit, he explained, laid-off supervisors from Barnes & Noble and Borders are brought in, chilling the relationship between management and labor. "They are afraid for their jobs," McCallion said of the supervisors. "So they take a purely disciplinary approach."

What's left is a young retail workforce alienated from the union, UAW Local 2179.

out there," McCallion said, pointing to jobless figures and stagnant wages brought on by the 2008 economic collapse.

Retail, or "no-collar," labor campaigns often face a skeptical public. During the Industrial Workers of the World organizing drive at Starbucks, people scoffed that these workers got medical benefits, so they shouldn't complain. Retail workers are seen as having

posals to show to members. It still contains a two-tiered wage system, and a union source says he is confident the membership will not vote for a deal that contains such a provision. If a vote is held, it will take place in early April. According to union sources, the company has said it needs its worker give-backs due to recent financial constraints.

The union has asked to see the company's financial records, and management has refused to provide them (as a privately held company, it has no legal obligation to do so). It is clear to some that the management offensive is a result of Bass Wyden taking on the day-to-day business operations. "It's been a colder shoulder than we're used to in previous negotiations," said one union source.

This transition doesn't just affect labor issues. Workers believe that management has changed the store from a dusty, bargain warehouse for bibliophiles to a slightly hipper version of Barnes & Noble. New, higher-priced books are displayed more prominently than used books, and more non-book merchandise is sold at the front. McCallion noted that a lot of this is a response to the rise of e-reader, and the shrinking numbers of independent bookstores. "They're looking for short-term fixes," he said.

McCallion insists that worker power is bolstered by the community of local residents, students and intellectuals who have a personal connection with the Strand, and that this community could be persuaded to support the workers and bring that message to the management. More important, this rank-and-file organization, which is working with activists from Occupy Your Workplace, wants to be a harbinger for more retail labor organizing around the city.

McCallion said that the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement last fall was an inspiration for a retail bargaining unit whose enthusiasm was waning.

"Suddenly it seemed possible," he said. "Every struggle took on a new context. 'Occupy' has become a great unifying thread for all the struggles going on."



IN A BIND: Chris McCallion is one of the many Strand workers who are opposed to the creation of an inferior wage and benefit tier for new workers. They are organizing with other retail worker groups, including Occupy Your Workplace.

There are "fewer union meetings," McCallion said, noting that "people don't have a lot of interest in union matters." On top of that, the workers are unsettled by the fact that they have few other career options. As McCallion explained, many people take jobs at the Strand to bide their time. People with master's degrees wait for a real academic job. Writers and musicians work in retail to pay the bills until something better comes along. "There really isn't that much better

chosen to work in a sector known for inferior wages and benefits rather than taking a job in civil service or manufacturing.

"We want to fight the idea that you should just accept the fact that 'I work in a high-turnover job, so I don't deserve rights,'" McCallion said. "It's a question of being treated with dignity, and not how someone's profit supersedes an ability to make a wage commensurate to the cost of living."

The union is currently finalizing a pro-

GLOBAL FIRE, LOCAL SPARKS

BEST OF THE INDYPENDENT 2011

\$15

INDYPENDENT.ORG/STORE



100% READY FOR 99% SPRING

TEXT BY INDEPENDENT STAFF &
PHOTOS BY SHELL SHEDDY

With temperatures breaking 70 at Union Square to welcome the arrival of spring, OWS held several protests in the days that followed and is pointing toward May 1 as a major day of protest in conjunction with labor unions and immigrant rights groups. *For more, see occupywallst.org.*



WWW.BRADLEYMANNING.ORG



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THE INDEPENDENT



Getting Schooled

OCCUPY TARGETS CORPORATE EDUCATION

BY ARI PAUL

It started as an act of political theater during the early days of the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) encampment at Zuccotti Park. Public school teachers and adjunct lecturers hosted a “grade-in,” a public display of the endless work educators do after 3:30 p.m. and on weekends. These teachers, who came from various groups opposed to Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s assault on public education and frustrated with the bureaucracy of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT), saw a unifying theme in their frustration.

“Our problems stem from the fact that we have no power, no voice in the classrooms,” said Kelley Wolcott, an eighth-grade English teacher in Red Hook, Brooklyn. And so Occupy the DOE (Department of Education) was born.

Wolcott, a member of the UFT reform group Teachers Unite, ticked off the threats facing New York City public education: the cap on the number of charter schools has been lifted, budget cuts have caused class sizes to increase, the layoffs of several hundred school aides, school closings and a new tenure system that put the burden of proof on the teacher. To top it all off, eight of the 13 seats of the main DOE decision-making body, the Panel for Educational Policy (PEP), are appointed by the mayor, making protests against City Hall policy a vain endeavor. Yet, because Bloomberg has the support of most of New York City’s dailies, he is still able to spread the idea that all the problems are caused not by his near-complete control, but rather by pesky union contract terms.

The choice to bring the Occupy name into this new approach is not just because of its Zuccotti Park roots, but because Bloomberg’s education policy is a blatant attempt to corporatize what should be a public good. Mayoral control of schools came to the city in 2002, replacing the system of local district boards, and the Bloomberg administration has used its power to bring the private-sector model of management to schools. A school’s success or failure, a multi-faceted and subjective judgment, is measured using a strictly quantitative method. (Think of Bloomberg’s rigid health-code grading system for restaurants applied to educating children.) Wolcott notes that this turns principals from pedagogical leaders into mere plant supervisors who pressure teachers to produce good numbers by sidelining students who need more help because they could jeopardize test scores, while the rest learn to simply correctly answer standardized exam questions rather than think critically.

“This only leads you to one method of education,” she said. “It’s this data craze. It’s not even quasi-scientific. The value-added

model always ensures failure.”

And why is this happening? Partly, it is because of the widely held belief that private-sector practices, which may work well for producing a variety of consumer goods, are a cure-all for the government’s institutional problems. But more troubling, many believe, is that the support of hedge-fund managers and other financiers for charter schools is proof that they are investing now for a payout later (a 2010 *New York Times* story notes that hedge fund managers are among charter advocacy groups’ most loyal, and lucrative, supporters). Wolcott couldn’t say for

and teachers. The movement, along with the UFT, supports legislation currently pending in Albany that would allow Community Education Councils to veto charter schools being located in public school buildings, a practice called co-location. These councils replaced district school boards after the implementation of mayoral control.

The movement combined protests with courting sympathetic lawmakers who may become more empowered to help if popular opinion sways against the Bloomberg administration.

“Messaging is key. Most of this is a war

There have been some victories, Wolcott said. For one thing, protests at PEP meetings have focused media attention on the issues, and teacher involvement has forced the UFT leadership to get more involved. “It’s interesting to see how we are shifting the conversation in many ways,” she said. “We can influence public opinion and get traction on ending certain policies, like closures and co-locations.”

Indeed, last month a Quinnipiac University poll showed that voters trusted the UFT more than City Hall. Certainly, some activists believe that Bloomberg’s education policy

lost popularity after public outrage led to the resignation of Schools Chancellor Cathie Black. As president of a newspaper company, Black once joked that the best way to deal with school overcrowding was more birth control.

But just as educational progress cannot be measured with cold, quantitative data, neither can the progress of this offshoot of OWS. If anything, according to Wolcott, the popularity of OWS tactics has invited more people in different communities to speak out about the privatization of education.

“Our presence has at least given people an alternative space to air their grievances,” she said. “There’s a real discontent that’s building.”

As this newspaper went to press March 22, Occupy the DOE planned a protest outside the offices of the *New York Post* for, according to a statement, “publishing the Teacher Data Reports of some 1,800 fourth through eighth grade teachers, with full knowledge of their many flaws from inaccurate class rosters to statistically irrelevant sample sizes and the massive opposition to their focus on high stakes standardized testing as the only means of assessing teachers and students.”



MAKING THE GRADE: Members of Occupy the DOE march through Brooklyn on March 1 en route to a meeting of the Panel for Educational Policy, the Mayor’s hand-picked school board.

sure what the market value of the \$1 million student city public school system was, but, he guesses, “It’s well into the billions.”

The OWS movement has been as much about confronting corporate control as it has been about deviating from traditional methods of reform and creating new types of resistance. For Occupy the DOE, that has entailed bringing its activists to PEP meetings to protest not only its policies but also its inherently anti-democratic processes. And while the UFT has advocated for more community input into education oversight, it still supports mayoral control. In fact, when the State Legislature reauthorized mayoral control in 2009, UFT President Michael Mulgrew said, “this legislation will provide the transparency and accountability, as well as parent participation, which will allow our school system’s progress to continue.”

Occupy the DOE, on the other hand, wants to end mayoral control outright. Bloomberg supporters point to the problems of the old board of education, which was rife with corruption and institutional failure, and the movement acknowledges this. But its members believe that the city can create an elected decision-making body that ensures equal input from parents, students

of perception because the other side is very effective in messaging,” Wolcott said.

Occupy the DOE, with its focus on the 1%’s stake in so-called education reform, points out something the mainstream debate about education ignores. While it is easy to blame the right wing for this assault on education workers and the public good, the mess was created by liberals. Bloomberg, a Republican by convenience, has been elected three times by liberal voters. Diane Ravitch, the founder of the charter school movement who has since radically changed her position, told me in an interview several years ago that President Barack Obama is farther to the right in terms of education than George W. Bush was.

Davis Guggenheim, the director of the pro-charter schools film *Waiting for ‘Superman,’* also directed Al Gore’s environmentalist documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* and a 17-minute Obama re-election campaign film. There are also groups like Democrats for Education Reform, whose board of directors includes several financiers. While liberals tend to support unions, collective bargaining in education is the one thing it is safe for them to pick on.

GRASSROOTS GROUPS

NEW YORK COLLECTIVE OF RADICAL EDUCATORS

nycore.org

A group of educators dedicated to fighting inequality and racism in the school system.

TEACHERS UNITE

teachersunite.net

Teachers working within their union to fight for educational and social justice for the low-income communities served by New York City schools.

GRASSROOTS EDUCATION MOVEMENT

gemnyc.org

Parents, students and educators pushing for education reform by building alliances with other activist groups and focusing on school-level organizing.

If I Had A Hammer: WOMEN IN NONTRADITIONAL JOBS SEE UNEVEN GAINS

By JANE LATOUR

Women are part of almost every blue-collar workplace. They're behind the scenes, alongside the men. They're installing fiber optics for a telecom company, fixing Con Edison equipment in the "manholes," behind the stage providing sound and lighting for Broadway shows, and on construction sites around the city. Almost five decades after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with its Title VII provisions for equal employment opportunity, and subsequent struggles through which women won the right to enter any apprentice program for the skilled trades — to become carpenters, electricians, painters and plumbers or join the fire department — they're on the job. But their numbers are low, and consequently they remain invisible. And that's a problem.

As long as women make up a statistically insignificant proportion of the blue-collar workforce, they're all too often viewed as what groundbreaking carpenter Irene Soloway called "the creature with two heads." As long as they are a tiny minority on any job, harassment and discrimination will continue. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the pioneers challenged stereotypes and broke barriers on the far frontier of feminism. Yet the persistence of discrimination leads directly to problems of recruitment and retention — posing a Catch-22 for women working in skilled blue-collar jobs. For Women's History Month, I surveyed some of the women working in these jobs and some who paved the way for others. These firsthand reports tell us what improvements have been made and what still needs to change in order to extend the gains of the women's movement to the working class.

FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS

While the New York City Fire Department has made great strides since the days of litigating, demonstrating and other forms of outright opposition to females in the ranks, there are currently only 28 female firefighters in a force of more than 11,000. The good news is that more than 2,600 women have applied to take the test to become a firefighter, according to Regina Wilson, president of United Women Firefighters.

Firefighter JoAnn Jacobs was among the first group of 40 women to enter the department in 1982, and she has recruited, mentored and trained women in preparation for prior tests. "I think that the presence of women firefighters on TV shows and in commercials makes a difference," she said. "It's a visual cue to women. You only need one for a woman to see something that gets her thinking: I can do that, too. They've grown up seeing this. Young women are so much more physical and strong. And then their husbands and boyfriends are encouraging them. Men see women doing kick boxing and other things that are outside the conventional female stereotypes. Women have stepped out of the traditional roles and images and these things are all making a difference."

Then again, stereotypes endure, as Eileen

Sullivan, a pioneering tractor-trailer driver, can attest. "This woman cab driver assured me that she was qualified to drive because she was a laid-off tractor-trailer driver. I assured her I would be fine with her driving but was disappointed that she felt the need to point it out — until she mentioned how many women refused to drive with her and would order another cab," she said.

Tile setter Angela Olszewski offers another perspective — about life inside her former union, Local 7, Bricklayers. "The union's public relations apparatus regularly exploited my intelligence, aptitude and skills," Olszewski recalled. "I appeared in union videos, newsletters and performed installation demonstrations. Ironically, at the same time my union appointed me to their Women's Task Force in 2001, I was also begging my employer, the local, and my apprentice coordinator to be trained in the higher skill sets of my craft. In my former union, women are nothing more than a novelty and are not taken seriously."

Veronica Session has been a carpenter for 23 years. A member of Local 926 of the New York District Council of Carpenters, she served as a shop steward, ran for citywide union office, volunteers with Habitat for Humanity and is an advocate for tradeswomen. "We have to navigate this industry with an overwhelming burden that a male doesn't have to contend with," she said. "Yet our motivation for being there is exactly the same, that is, to earn a living, support our families, and build a better future. We just happen to be female. Research, statistics and common sense tell us the reason for the low number of

women working in the industry. The numbers are even lower if you only note the women who are actively working versus those who are just keeping up their union book. The numbers are shameful because of the hostile environment."

SIGNS OF HOPE

Yet there are green shoots and some signs of improvement. In 1985, Elly Spicer joined the United Brotherhood of Carpenters in New York City. She now

serves as the director of the Labor Technical College for the District Council of Carpenters. "Currently, there are 951 male and 130 female apprentices," she said. "I think there've been changes in attitudes toward women — it isn't such a big deal. What hasn't changed are the numbers of women coming and staying. I think we could have made a

significant difference if the economy hadn't bottomed out. But this apprentice program took in a significant number of women — from 15 to 18 percent female. But when the economy is bad, opportunities are limited — for men and for women."

Françoise Jacobsohn, who heads the Equality Works Project for Legal Momentum, said, "There are lots of exciting things going on, along with the same old, same old." She pointed to the National Task Force on Tradeswomen's Issues, which came out of last year's Tradeswomen's Conference in California. This spring, the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship and the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs are planning to issue proposals to revise equal opportunity regulations for Registered Apprenticeship programs and federal and federally assisted construction contractors. "Our goal is to unite regional and national expertise and action to update the regulations — and make sure the regulations are implemented and enforced," Jacobsohn said. "It's critical that the government have a clear understanding of the challenges women and people of color face in these programs so that appropriate changes can be made to the laws."

No discussion of good news is complete without noting that New York City is home to three women who are directing apprenticeship programs. In addition to Spicer, Leah Rambo heads up the program for Local 28, Sheet Metal Workers, and Wendy Webb is the co-coordinator of Local 79 Mason Tenders' program. "Elly Spicer is director of the largest apprenticeship program in the state," Jacobsohn said. "She also helped co-found one of the most active and successful union women's committees in the country."

Women have made enormous strides in the workforce, especially professional women. New York City is backing a \$2 billion research campus in partnership with Cornell University on Roosevelt Island. This is great for engineers — including female engineers. Nationally, girls are participating in robotics competitions in large numbers and enrolling in engineering colleges. In upstate New York, the Rochester Institute of Technology has established impressive mentoring programs for females. Meanwhile, New York City's vocational schools — bastions of gender division that funnel boys into carpentry programs while teaching girls low-paying clerical skills — are being dismantled and de-funded. The fight for equal employment opportunity and good jobs for everyone is far from over.

Jane LaTour is the author of *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).



How Feminism Liberates Men

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

“Yo let me talk you,” he shouted. I turned, face tightening around my eyes. A young man stood on the steps of the building, gripping his crotch and pointing at the girls next to me. Eyebrows raised, they glanced at each other and quickly walked. “Yo I’m talking to you bitch!” he yelled. I stared at him and then down Nostrand Avenue as women marched through a gauntlet of men, who leaned in to seduce them and cursed the women who didn’t stop. It was like a hazing ritual.

I called my friend and said, “I hate spring in the ghetto. Every ignorant dick without a job keeps busy by cat-calling.” She took a long breath and said, “How does it feel to be a problem?” Heat rose in my face as she said, “I’m happy you’re mad, but as a male feminist what are you going to do?”

The question rang in my head. How does it feel to be a problem? As a man who learned feminist theory, it’s an inevitable question. Just walking in the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant, I see teenage girls prowled by older men or boys on the corner shouting “bitch” and “pussy” to show off. Or I see Black women in hip-hop magazines, oiled and wearing bikinis, while fashion magazines show men in suits. Or I hear my friend telling me how she was raped and saw her attacker on the subway and he casually talked to her until she screamed. Each event connects to the next with one continuous sexist ideology.

And seeing this ideology is liberating. I can separate women from the imagery of hood-rats, chicken heads, tip drills or jump offs. And I can dump the ignitable pride of machismo that gets young men killed. But it also leaves one feeling stranded among people who are blindly hurting themselves.

Returning home, I looked on my shelf for bell hook’s *Ain’t I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. I had bought it in college during a ravenous time of reading and saw on its yellowed pages my old notes. Her writing led me to Gloria Anzaldua and Toni Morrison, Margaret Mead and the *SCUM Manifesto*. Each book was like a microscope and I saw in my behavior, sexist ideas that I inherited from history and society. But recognizing sexist tendencies was only the first step. The next was placing the experiences

of others under the same lens.

My mother was qualified for jobs, but not hired. I saw a photo of a woman who died in hotel, trying to give herself an abortion because they weren’t legal yet. During *The Killers*, Ronald Reagan slapped a woman and everyone howled with laughter. I began to see the pattern of gender violence. The more I recognized sexism the more guilt I

felt. My unexamined privileges became as bright as neon. In my last year of college, it got to a fever pitch. I carried around a Ken doll and would point to the absent genitalia and say, “This is how all men should be.”

Guilt is a rite of passage for a male feminist but so is transforming that guilt into wonder. Feminist values create a world of emotional transparency. I glimpsed this world at antiwar protests where men and women fought against police, calling each other “sister” and “brother.”

But it wasn’t until Burning Man in 2002 that I experienced true gender equality. In the sun-bleached Nevada desert, 30,000 people built a city on the principles of radical self-expression and de commodified immediate experience. Many women walked around nude, topless or in elaborate costumes and for the most part, men did not leer or stalk.

In that free space, women walked with a confidence and power because they weren’t selling themselves to a male gaze but expressing desire in their own language. Surveying the magazines at an airport news stand before my flight back to New York, I was struck by how the female body was used like a sponge to wash down cars or watches or male celebrities.

Feminism does not need male guilt; it needs male desire for freedom. Whole dimensions of the male psyche open up when sexist power dynamics are shut off. And it is a world worth fighting for. When my friend called me back and asked how I was doing, I told her my bag was filled with chalk and I was writing anti-sexual harassment slogans on the sidewalk. “What are you going to write?” she asked. I said, “Imagine a white man called you a nigger. That’s how a woman feels when you call her a bitch.” After a long pause she said, “Not bad. It’s a start.”



ROBLAQUINTA

Exodus from Williamsburg

DEBORAH FELDMAN'S MEMOIR SHOCKS ULTRA-ORTHODOX SECT

BY ROSIE GOLDENSOHN

Of the several sects of ultra-Orthodox Jews in New York City, the Satmar community in Williamsburg, Brooklyn has a reputation as the strictest and least penetrable. Members found themselves uncomfortably in the public eye last October, when the Parks Department removed Yiddish signs posted along Bedford Avenue that ordered women to step aside for men on the sidewalk. If that was a window into Satmar culture, 25-year-old author and former Satmar Deborah Feldman has just blown the door open. Her first book, *Unorthodox: The Scandalous Rejection of My Hasidic Roots*, tells the story of her upbringing, arranged marriage, divorce and departure from the Satmar community.

Raised by her grandparents after her mother left her mentally disabled father and the community, Feldman attended Sarah Lawrence College in secret and began blogging under the name Hasidic Feminist. It was her education, both institutional and individual, that aided her departure from the sect.

I recently caught up with Feldman between publicity appearances.



Deborah Feldman

TELISHCH & NOMIS JO ASYETROU

ROSIE GOLDENSOHN: *How many people have left your community?*

DEBORAH FELDMAN: The one I grew up in, I can count on my fingers. I don’t know any women.

I just received an email from a woman in Israel who is, as far as she knows, the only woman who’s left the Satmar community in Israel. She wrote me a letter in Yiddish, she can’t speak English and is just learning Hebrew. She’s got to have even more courage to leave because the Satmar community in Israel is a lot more extreme.

RG: *In your book, you detail how you managed to secretly read English books as a kid even though they were prohibited. How did you start reading secular books?*

DF: I would be in Borough Park taking that bus once a week and I remember waiting for the bus and looking across the street and seeing that teeny little Mapleton library branch. It was a little red brick building. Just on impulse I walked in and that’s sort of where it started. I went to the children’s section and read Roald Dahl’s *Matilda*. I started borrowing books and bringing them home when I finally got old enough to have a library card, and then I started working and buying books at Barnes & Noble.

RG: *So when you were growing up, I’m curious about how you thought the world worked.*

DF: I didn’t really know there was a world, and if there was, it was like another planet. I thought people looked at my costume and thought I was a freak and an Other. I even felt like an Other among most Jews, because even among most Jews, Satmar is like this freakish thing that we don’t know about or associate with, so I always felt like I had no place anywhere outside the Satmar community.

RG: *You applied to Sarah Lawrence secretly, telling your husband you were taking business classes. Do other Satmar women*

go to college?

DF: They just don’t. They leave school at 15 or 16, they might have some kind of part-time job for a year and then they get married and have children.

I got my support network at Sarah Lawrence. They really saved my life.

I remember when I got there and took a political philosophy class and we started with feminist literature. I was like, ‘Oh my God, this is validating things that I feel. Finally I understand all my thoughts and the context.’ I was getting this dose of feminism coming from a place that had never even allowed me to think that might exist.

So here I am feeling validated, overjoyed, amazingly passionate about this literature, and we’re moving on in the political philosophy class to the issue of justice and multiculturalism. And then we would read all these liberal philosophers who believed: leave cultures alone, let them do what they do.

And I remember sitting there and feeling this enormous conflict. I’ve not yet managed to have that conflict lift. I read and I think, ‘How can I reconcile my respect for difference, diversity, and my desire to advocate for women’s rights?’ So this is what I’ve been completely struggling with.

RG: *Some people are upset about your book. How are you dealing with that?*

DF: I’ve been getting all these emails from people who are not Orthodox, but are mad at me for embarrassing Judaism by speaking out about my past. We’re all supposed to support Jews, but if we’re gay or if we’re women or in any way oppressed, we should keep quiet about that.

What I think we have to do in response, just in the way I think Islam has attempted to do, is separate out fundamentalism. It’s not part of the religion or the culture. It’s just fundamentalism.

To read the complete transcript of this interview, visit independent.org.



Photo: Zenzile Greene

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Take My Kids, Please!



BY ANN SCHNEIDER

Every time I'm involved in a custody case, I wonder why the woman doesn't gladly give the kid over to the father. Let *him* have the temper tantrums, the fuss, the pickiness at mealtime and the daily fight to get them out of bed. Not to mention the chronic exhaustion, constant worry, self-imposed guilt and sexual denial that go along with having a child. "But what kind of mother would give up her child?" they say to me, implicitly answering their own question.

Why should a woman's identity be so intimately tied to her status as a mother? And why would any rational person assume the punishments of motherhood in exchange for the blandishments they receive?

Elizabeth Warren has written that, in the United States, there is no surer path to poverty and economic insecurity than to bear a child. A 2004 report by the Community Services Society found that a single parent in New York City needs to earn \$49,874 to cover the minimum expenses of rent, food, utilities, clothes, transportation and child-care for two children. Even excluding college, the cost of raising a child to age 18 is more than \$208,000.

I've never thought the world needed more children that look like me and hog the disproportionate resources that Americans are already exhausting. There are plenty of children in our foster care system who desperately need individual, permanent attention. Former comrades have disappointed me when they become parents. Suddenly the scope of their concern shrinks from all the world's children to their own child above all.

Without European-style social supports, the financial and emotional costs of child-rearing virtually always fall on women. MacArthur fellow Nancy Folbre explores this in *The Invisible Heart: Economics and Family Values*. In France, any woman with at least 10 months prior work experience can take maternal leave of 16 weeks, paid at 84 percent of her salary. Both fathers and mothers have the right to reduce their work hours (and pay proportionately) until the child turns age three. National health insurance and day care centers with well-paid, well-educated teachers also demonstrate France's commitment to what they call "our greatest resource." Even the poor country of Morocco provides a government-paid Family Allowance of about \$25 per month to all families with children. I'd gladly pay greater taxes to alleviate female and child poverty in the United States.

Ironically, the day care workers that I rep-

resented for a decade in Local 1707, mostly women of color and single parents, did not make enough to raise their own children. They are unionized, but their contract expired in June 2006 and Mayor Bloomberg refuses to meet with them to renegotiate.

And there are added risks to being a mother in New York City. In public housing, you and the rest of your dependents can lose your housing of last resort if one kid steals a chain or sells drugs. This is thanks to New York City Housing Authority's "no tolerance" policy and a particularly heartless U.S. Supreme Court decision.

I've had female clients prosecuted in family court for having a dirty house or shut-off utilities, or for failing to get their kids to school. Yet it is exceedingly rare for a father or male companion to be held similarly responsible. He can simply leave the household.

Only child support laws provide any social coercion for men to take care of their children, and they are ineffective when the father is jailed or marginally employed. The fact is that men are not judged on their domestic skills. As a guy in a bar once said to me, "Having children doesn't define who you are." Imagine a woman saying that!

My Belgian friend thinks of raising children as "giving to the world." That is a lovely sentiment. But here in the backward United States, the obligation to feed a family falls solely on the individual parents. Healthcare must be earned, lest we lose our incentive to work at a dead-end job. Children are an expensive luxury for those that can afford them; and for those already here, the sacrifices made by their caregivers are never counted and seldom recognized. It's enough to make a feminist's blood boil.

The new pro-natalism so popular in Tribeca, Fort Greene and Park Slope seems to carry no articulated critique of the nuclear family, nor of its constrictions to women's development. I know that young fathers today participate much more in child-rearing than previous generations, but it is almost always the woman who is the stay-at-home parent, judging from who I see pushing the baby carriage.

Meanwhile, every element of the legal profession is obsessed with domestic violence and individual batterers, while ignoring the systemic causes of women's poverty and degradation. Feminism has been robbed of its revolutionary potential, even while it's given lip service by every judge on the bench in New York City.

Until it becomes possible to be a mother in the United States without doing violence to one's self, I'll boycott the institution.

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Occupy the Body RECLAIMING OURSELVES

BY NICHOLAS POWERS

This essay is a celebration of a woman whose name I don't know. She strutted through the blue tents of Occupy Wall Street in a bikini and coat, bare-breasted. Posing for photos, she held a sign that read, "I didn't say look. I said listen." On her belly she wrote, "The naked truth is that Wall Street is screwing us all." Months after the police evacuation she has a second life on YouTube. In a video, she and two women, also bare-chested, were told by cops to cover up. Instead they chanted louder, eyes lit with new freedom. It was obvious they occupied more than a city park. They occupied their bodies.

To occupy: it means to fill up time or space, to dwell in, to seize possession and maintain control over as if by conquest. The word fit our protest as we marched in downtown Manhattan, shouting against the bankers who gambled with the world's wealth. Under the banner of the 99%, we entered Zuccotti Park and took over more than physical space; we seized possession of the social narrative. We translated the anxiety of millions of Americans, stranded in a broken economy into a new language. In place of capitalist competition, we practiced horizontal cooperation. In place of iTunes, we drummed, sang and danced. In place of isolation, we cuddled in the open night. And instead of propaganda or corporate branding, we practiced free art. In doing this, we seized control and dwelled in the vacant state of existence beyond capitalism.

What shocked us was the voltage of hidden truth coursing through our bodies. It healed our minds and reintegrated parts of our psyche that had been divided against each other. We were liberated from empty work, our emotions were not commodities and we felt a physical euphoria rising from the tent city of OWS. Outside of the everyday ringing of cash registers and blaring advertisements, we created a space and within that space, we experienced the body's suppressed need for communion. And we felt the body's need to explore desires buried in muscle and sizzling in the nerves.

In reverse, what the physical euphoria of the Occupy Movement shows is that the body is the first victim of oppression. The weight of history enters our minds through language and grows heavier throughout our lives. In childhood, we learn to see social ideals shining in the center of every conversation. And with it, come the silent questions. Are you thin enough, rich or white enough? Are you young enough, Facebooked and famous enough? Are you Christian enough? Are you married and straight? Do you have a new car? Do you have a nice house? Do

you have a career or just a job?

And in trying to achieve these ideals, our eyes become scissors cutting whole parts of our physiques and minds. The harder one tries to fit inside the center, the more alienated we become from our bodies and ourselves. And these two forces create each other; the vast psychological distance of alienation and the urgent return to the body. Together they are the tidal force of history, washing over us, leaving our lives far from where they began.

Today, alienation comes from the great distance between our advertisements and our incomes. Capitalism is a global culture of spectacle where images of wealth swirl around a shrinking labor force already too deep in debt to afford the good life. And yet the anxiety caused by this systemic failure is framed as personal failure. And the Left discovered decades ago that "the personal is political."

In the 1969 essay of the same name by Carol Hanisch, she defined "political therapy" as the realization that our problems are not ours alone but caused by a larger system. A void existed between the American collective experience and its political expression and we occupied it until we couldn't be ignored.

In this void, the Occupy Generation created a roving world of transparent democracy. We slept in the open air on cold cement, chanting until our hoarse voices echoed through the cities of the world. And the world listened because when the body speaks, every silence echoes with its truth.

Just before one becomes free, comes a painful moment of breaking through the old self. I have to admit, when I first saw the bare-breasted woman walking through the park, I got angry. My fear was she endangered the image of the movement. But I checked myself and asked whose values was I judging her by? She wasn't hurting anyone. She was using her body to express a political message. Once again, I was confronted with how much conservative ideology I had internalized. I breathed and let it go.

When I looked again, she reminded me of the famous painting *Liberty Leads the People* by Eugene Delacroix in which a bare-breasted woman holding the French flag leads the revolutionaries to victory. Now when I see the YouTube video of the three women, standing bare-breasted and chanting, I define it as one of the many acts that shattered our alienation and returned us to the body, the pivot around which history revolves.

By ICHI VAZQUEZ

It was several days after my birthday, and my best friend and I walked up the creaky wooden stairs into my boyfriend's apartment. As we walked through the door, I noticed it was quiet and dark. "Isn't someone supposed to be home?" I thought.

A dozen faces sped toward me screaming "SURPRISE!" I stood in disbelief, staring at my friends and loved ones, and I could feel a wide grin take over my face. I spotted my boyfriend coming toward me with open arms, sweeping me up into a fierce hug. "You have no idea how long I've been planning this," he said, laughing with relief and happiness. I pulled him into a deep, sweet kiss of gratitude. Through the frenzy of hugs and happy chatter, I saw my

secondary partner, who had driven hours up to the city to stay the weekend and be a part of the surprise. Thrilled that he was there, I kissed him lovingly.

I turned my head and rested it on his chest as my eyes found my boyfriend's gaze near the front of the room. He stared at me adoringly as I was being held by my other partner, and my eyes silently sent him waves of joy and love. I felt so immensely cared for — the combination of being held by one man I adored and receiving space to enjoy myself from the man I loved. This was pure happiness...

I was raised to believe that there were only so many ways I could behave when it came to love. I was told no sex before marriage — wait because the right man will eventually sweep you off your feet. I was told cheating is wrong but if your husband does it, work on your marriage anyway. I was told not to dress too provocatively, and that I should only be with one person — anything else wasn't moral.

These social rules governed the way I looked, felt and interacted with others. But when you don't know that it is your birthright to love and ex-

press your emotions in whatever way your heart desires, how is one supposed to discover that there are infinite choices?

I certainly didn't know other choices existed until I came to New York City. It was here in this bubbling melting-pot city of various cultures, lifestyles and artistic innovations that I stumbled across the world of polyamory almost five years ago — and it has forever altered the way I see myself as well as my connection with others.

Polyamory — Greek for "loving many," is the practice of being in multiple emotionally invested relationships with the full consent of all parties involved. In this non-monogamous lifestyle, I learned that certain freedoms my partner and I gave each other actually brought us closer. I learned of numerous ways to connect romantically

with someone that don't involve sex. I rediscovered the value and intimacy of a single kiss. I learned that my heart feels genuine love in numerous degrees and variations for all the special people who have been in my life.

I exposed myself to situations that provoked my deepest fears of abandonment, betrayal and jealousy. I lived through them, and came out the other side with a deeper understanding of my heart and myself.

Although modern polyamory may be a new concept for some, there are many cases of consensual non-monogamous ideals and traditions in history. There are those who even present arguments that human beings are biologically wired to be with multiple sexual partners, as is noted in the recent book, *Sex At Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality* by Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jethá. But whether or not we are truly wired to be promiscuous, human beings are undoubtedly sexually curious by nature.

AN INTERNAL REVOLUTION

It is ironic that we live in a society that is slowly catching on to the idea of "loving many openly" over "loving many in secret" but that still calls women sluts for using birth control. Women's sexuality has been transformed into a commodity that corporate marketers use to push us into consumption. In short, we are made to feel deeply inadequate because our bodies do not meet society's standards of beauty. Our sexuality has been labeled and put in a neat little box for us, and to venture outside these boundaries is to be ostracized.

And yet, as my curiosity got the best of me, I found myself questioning every ideal about love and sex that I thought was truly mine — but really wasn't. It was this realization that finally gave me the courage to break free. As co-authors Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy write in their book *The Ethical Slut*:

"In his lectures to young communists in Germany during the rise of Hitler and the Nazis, psychologist Wilhelm Reich theorized that the suppression of sexuality was essential to an authoritarian government. Without the imposition of antisexual morality, he believed, people would be free from shame and would trust their own sense of right and wrong. ... Perhaps if we were raised without shame and guilt about our desires, we might be freer people in more ways than simply the sexual."

Discussing which rules I wanted to follow in my relationships gave me a greater sense of freedom, empathy and empowerment — not just in my connections with others, but also within myself. I was an equal on a team, a life adventurer — not a subordinate or a passive participant. For the first time, I truly felt like I was living out subconscious curiosities that were coming from the deepest recesses of my heart.

Exploring polyamory encouraged me to seek wholeness on my own, as opposed to feeling whole thanks to my relationships or other external factors. People screw up.

They let you down, they change their minds and they break promises — so even if you are receiving genuine love from various relationships, your priority should always be to love yourself no matter what happens. It's also okay that partners can't meet every need you have — they aren't supposed to. Taking responsibility for one's own happiness is a lesson that spans a lifetime.

This responsibility actively forced me to pay closer attention to the choices I made on a daily basis. My emotions became deeper, more alive — I began to have a conscious awareness of myself that I never had before. This sensitivity still resides within me today, even as I continue this journey of self-exploration without my former partners.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

While polyamory has ideals that promote fairness and equality, there are those who get involved with this type of connecting for the wrong reasons.

One of the biggest challenges I tackled within myself was learning to communicate with partners more than I ever had before, and standing my ground. Many women struggle between pleasing their partners and listening to what their hearts really tell them, leading to the sacrifice or repression of their feelings more often than is healthy. It takes courage to say no to a loved one who does things that hurt or upset you. However difficult it may be, this type of communication clears the air and ensures that no one takes your kindness and love for granted. Having boundaries is sexy. Being walked all over isn't.

Polyamory isn't for everyone, and this article certainly isn't a call for everyone to embrace it as the main model for relationships. After all, no one way of relating is "better" than another. The importance here lies not in having multiple partners, but in the freedom to mold and create how we connect to each other from the most platonic to the most intimate of ways.

Do you want to create a loving environment with multiple partners that allows for a husband and a boyfriend? Do it. Do you want to nourish and build a relationship with a single partner, but still have lots of cuddle buddies? Go ahead. Do you feel as though you need these options (or anything and everything in between) available to you at different parts of your life? Find a partner who is just as flexible as you — they are out there. The point is to design your own safe space where you can express intimacy and love with whomever you want and not have outside forces dictate the "right" or "wrong" way to do this.

As women, we have long battled these forces — manifested as sexist political debates, cultural norms or even friends and family who don't understand us. By taking control of our hearts and sexuality and seeking others who are like-minded, we can take control of the most precious gifts of self-expression and sharing we have. And perhaps this will lead to other personal revolutions that inspire rebuilding the kind of world where love truly has no boundaries, we no longer feel the pull of popular repressive ideals — and we answer to no one but our highest selves.



Sex Workers in the Shadows

BY ALLISON BURTCH

If a string of wealthy businessmen or politicians were to disappear, chances are the New York Police Department would take it seriously. But when 911 calls are made regarding sex workers, little is done. At least that was what Melissa Barthelemy's parents experienced when they reported her missing in 2009. After calling her Bronx apartment for three days and receiving no answer, her parents contacted the NYPD. According to the *Daily News*, the sergeant who answered the phone hung up.

In December 2010, while searching for Shannon Gilbert, police found Barthelemy's body, along with the bodies of Maureen Brainard-Barnes, Megan Waterman and Amber Lynn Costello, near Ocean Parkway at Gilgo Beach on Long Island. Five other unidentified bodies were eventually found on Long Island: three adult women, one toddler and a man wearing women's clothing. The remains of Jessica Taylor were found in March 2011. Gilbert's body was later found on Long Island in December 2011. On Feb. 17, a decomposed body was found in Manorville on Long Island. Police say it had been there for five years. On March 21, another body was found, bringing the count to twelve. Of the twelve bodies that have been recovered, only five have been identified.

The identified victims were all sex workers.

Their disappearances had drawn little

attention until someone mentioned "serial killer," a term now glamorized by shows like *Dexter* and *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*.

The stigma associated with sex work and its illegal status make it very dangerous for the workers themselves. According to 2010 FBI data, women accounted for a shocking 70 percent of the 1,398 known victims of serial killers since 1985. Comparatively, only 22 percent of homicide victims were women. Sex workers are 40 times more likely to die from something other than natural causes. According to the *American Journal of Epidemiology*, an average of 124 sex workers were killed annually between the years 1981 and 1990.

It wasn't always like this. In "Prostitutes as Victims of Serial Killers," published in Sage Journal's *Homicide Studies*, Kenna

Quinet found that "the proportion of solved cases involving female prostitute victims increased across the study period from 16 percent during 1970 to 1979 to a high of 69

percent during 2000 to 2009." Killers believe they can get away with it. Gary Leon Ridgway, who came to be known as the Green River killer, confessed in 2003 to killing 48 sex workers in the Pacific Northwest. "I thought I could kill as many as I wanted to without getting caught," he said in court.

Often police, rather than vigorously pursuing justice in cases of crimes against sex workers, commit violence themselves. In the 2003 publication, "Revolving Door," the New York City's Sex Workers Project interviewed street-based sex workers regarding both interactions with the police and their willingness to go to the police after experiencing a violent crime. Because

assault was often perpetrated by police themselves, sex workers tended to not report crimes. "Thirty percent of sex workers interviewed told researchers that they had been threatened with violence by police officers, while 27 percent actually experienced violence at the hands of police. ... Prostitutes often encounter the popular belief that it is not possible for a prostitute to be raped." When contacting police after being assaulted, some sex workers were told that "their complaints would not be accepted, that this is what they should expect and that they deserve all that they get."

Further complicating safety for sex workers is the fact that carrying condoms can be used as evidence in a trial against them. In the same study by the Sex Workers Project, 16 out of 35 sex workers did not carry condoms for fear of police retaliation. Though New York City runs a condom distribution program, New York courts allow condoms as evidence of prostitution, putting sex workers in a safety Catch-22. What would you choose, a sexually transmitted disease or jail?

Sex workers must be able to operate without stigma and fear of violence, especially violence from the police. They must be able to carry condoms without fear of reprisal. And when the media glamorizes the killers and not the victims, we must remember the nameless. We remember Maureen, Melissa, Megan, Amber and Shannon.



LYNNE FOSTER

Walking Away from the Black Church

BY AI ELO

Finding my way out of the Black Baptist church that I attended while growing up was like escaping a long hazing ritual. It was where people told magical stories, dressed in wild clothing and smelled like the perfume section in Macy's. One Sunday I sat next to a worshipper who gave me a black eye as she danced for the Lord — shouting sacred gibberish as she was wheel-chaired into a quiet room. And the pastors dressed like a panhandler's fashion show. My pastor used a gold microphone and wore orange alligator shoes. But beyond the absurdity, the Black church was a dangerous place to be a woman.

Sitting in the pews, I heard sermons of waking up in fiery hell if I had sex for pleasure. Church members often nudged me on the shoulder and said, "You better still be a virgin" with a wink and a smile. During services, I fidgeted in hot turtlenecks, long skirts and thick itchy nylons in 95-degree Florida weather. My grandmother said it made me less of a distraction to the old men.

The sexual hypocrisy was drummed into me but the strangest experience, the one that started my break from the church, wasn't even my own. During one service, my pastor stood over our brown sweaty faces at the end of his Sunday sermon. We were exhausted from singing and wringing out tensions from our bodies. He lifted the microphone to his lips and cued the musicians to play softer, signaling with his hands as if he were petting the air.

He made a confession. His teenage daughter was pregnant by a well-known boy in the church. There were sighs, a single gasp and then silence. His daughter, a poised and lively girl most Sundays, sat silently next to her mother slumped over with a glassy-eyed stare. It felt as if we were in a courtroom.

After that moment everything changed. The father of the unborn child was given an SUV. He began dressing in more adult tailored suits. He became popular with the other women in the church as his pregnant girlfriend became quiet. Her belly was bulging but she was invisible. A few people shot resentful looks at her and even fewer greeted her.

I didn't stop going to services right away but I began to ask questions. Others were distancing themselves from the church. A friend of mine said, "After my church bought my pastor a Hummer, I was done." Another told me, "I got kicked out for questioning things. It irritated everyone else." And my aunt whispered, "I knew I had to quit going there because every time I got ready for church I had to stop at the A T M . " But what finally pushed me out of the church was that God was in my bedroom.

I was taught that God was everywhere. He watched me touch myself. He sucked his teeth as I flipped through my uncle's porn magazines. God was under the covers with me. He barged into my head and tallied every time I stared at a pair of breasts or felt a

tingle between my thighs. He was in places he had no business. It made me a sinner, a hypocrite, caught in a cycle of sexual suppression and guilt. The first time I had sex I cried because God saw the whole thing and was going to tell my grandmother. I couldn't take it anymore and started to question the reality of God until eventually I became an atheist.

I'm not alone. Black atheist women are coming out of the closet by the thousands, and when you're black, telling relatives that you're not a believer is like divorcing your entire culture. You lose friends and family and spend holidays vacationing with new confidants or if you do return, you awkwardly fork Styrofoam plates while being harangued by parents that this could only be a phase. But it's not a phase when the evidence is right in front of you. I remember seeing news helicopters flying over Pastor Creflo A. Dollar's multimillion dollar estate in Georgia and thinking that religion is great business. Megachurches like his rake in billions of unreported revenue. What those outside of Black America don't know is that the Black church is the

1%. Some of the richest people in the poorest neighborhoods are prosperity preachers. Churches grow big on the desperation of families who hope prayers will fill their stomachs.

I never went back to the church. Instead, I asked God to go away. He did and so did my family. And so did the pressure to be "good." I'm no longer wearing stiff layers of morality and mythology. My atheism frees me to seek social justice, especially for women. We are the ones who feel the pressure of the church's sexual hypocrisy worst.

Years after leaving, I was in Brooklyn with a clipboard, standing wide and belting out to people walking by on the sidewalk, "Would you like to help protect Planned Parenthood? Fourteen states have been federally defunded." A Haitian woman stopped and lamented, "Isn't that the abortion clinic? Because of my faith I can't support that." She nodded her head proudly. Even though I could have been fired for abandoning the sales pitch I said, "I enjoyed the free counseling and pap smear I received after I was raped. I enjoy the government-sponsored IUD preventing me from an unwanted pregnancy. I enjoy having sex with my partner without a condom and if I were to have an unintended pregnancy I would enjoy the abortion as well. I just want other women to experience the same privileges that make my life easier."

Her immediate shock and confusion was as familiar as the Black church ladies I grew up pissing off. But her tension cooled to concern. She handed me a dollar without making eye contact and said she'd visit Planned Parenthood's website to learn more. The brief encounter made me realize that she, like many church women, never thinks of the impact of her borrowed convictions on other people's lives. Thank heaven I'm an atheist.



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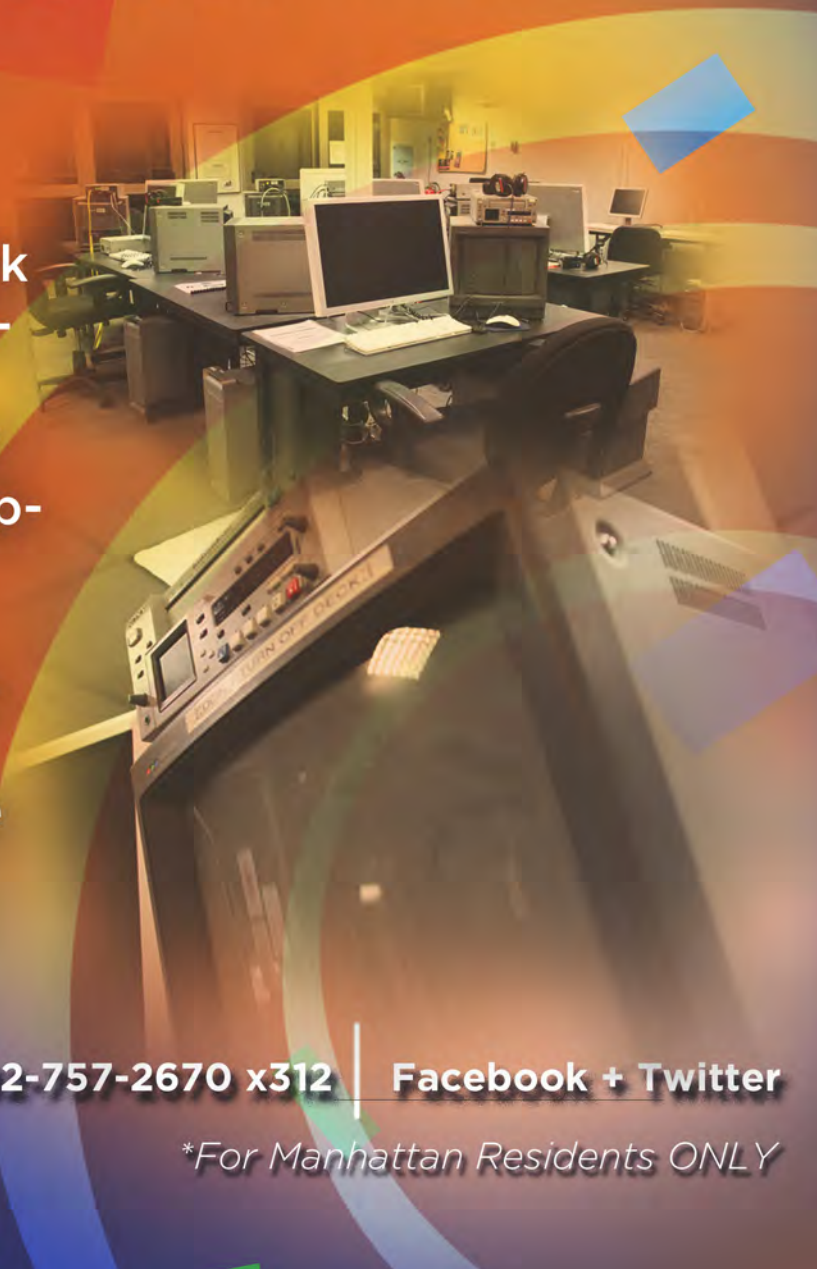
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Global Art Uprising

BY MATT KENNARD

LONDON—When Soraya Morayef, a budding Egyptian art curator, walked into Townhouse gallery in Cairo in the aftermath of the ousting of Hosni Mubarak, she expected the usual brush-off. Her friends had previously pitched exhibitions of their passion: graffiti and stencil-based work, or what is now given the catch-all term “street art.” Every time, they had been turned away.

But not now. “When I approached them I really didn’t think they would do it,” she says. “I had no credentials, I had no background. But now there is this increasing new interest in graffiti and street art, that’s why they eventually took me.”

Morayef was the beneficiary of a sea-change in the Egyptian art world since the country’s revolution sparked an explosion of paint and posters scrawled on walls in cities around the country. “The revolution has massively impacted the art scene in Egypt, it’s now a lot more diverse and there’s a lot of work inspired or based on the revolution,” says Morayef.

The same pattern has been seen across the Arab world as people have shaken their chains over the past year. Now, Western intelligence officers no longer have to gauge the temperature of the “Arab street” through clandestine interviews: they just have to look at the walls around the cities and analyze the Arab street art. In Arabic, it is called *el-fann midan* — literally translated, “art in the square.” The mixed experiences of euphoria, mourning and loss have been creatively rendered all over the cities of the Levant.

“Art has played a major role in the Egyptian revolution, for the most part because street art and graffiti as in a Western form simply didn’t exist, now it’s everywhere,” said Omar Ozalp, co-owner of the Articulate Baboon gallery on the outskirts of Cairo. “More important, each one carries a message, be it political or social, which for once has the Egyptian population thinking.”

The other co-owner of the gallery, Adam Maroud, adds: “Corner after corner after corner was suddenly emblazoned with a battle cry in rushed lettering or a perfect stencil of pop-culture political satire and it was beautiful and stirring to watch it spread. Nothing to me personifies creative freedom more than a bold graffiti piece on a very public wall.”

And it’s not just the Middle East. Art has flourished around the world over the past year — from Haiti to Chile to China — as people have fought back against totalitarian governments and tried to make sense of broken societies using brushes as well as bricks. For many young people, street art has become the perfect “crime” when living in a closed dictatorship with no free press. If you do not get caught in the act, there is no way for the authorities to track you down most of the time.

“I think the creative output during this unfinished revolution is an integral part in its continuation and the direction it’s bound to take,” says Ganzeer, the most prominent street artist in Egypt, who was arrested for making posters at the height of the protests.

The move out of galleries, as artists take their work to the people, also represents a “democratization” of the creative arts. “The streets are for everybody. The gallery is for an art-seeking niche,” says Ganzeer. “It’s very wrong for the streets to be so open to the brainwashing effects of capitalist-driven advertisers and so closed off to honest art,

which has been trapped into the confinements of fake gallery constructs. Galleries need to exist, but it shouldn’t be the only way to be able to experience art.”

In crisis-wracked Europe, the *indignados* in Spain, as well as young people in Germany, Greece and France, have also used their city walls as canvases to get their message across. Evol is a German artist who

For many of the new generation, the period where the pursuit of money appeared to rule all forms of creativity — viz. the canonization of Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst — is over. The postmodern ironies of the Young British Artists movement have been destroyed by the immediacy of the human crises happening around the world. Young artists now feel the need to reflect on the chaos

ments that represented the movements in society and of the Bolshevik revolution. They stopped making one-off art works to produce printed material, posters, pamphlets, and placards that could be used by the Russian people. Their work was later banned under Stalin, who wanted a much more dictatorial form of art, or pure propaganda that didn’t engage in more avant-garde abstraction.

Political artists following on from the Constructivists, include German anti-fascist artist John Heartfield, who devised a form of photomontage that became a weapon against the rise of Nazism. His work was so powerful that he was high on the Nazi hit list and had to flee Germany.

In one of his most famous montages he showed Hitler doing his customary salute and a giant businessman handing him money, highlighting that behind all Hitler’s socialist rhetoric, it was big business that supported his rise to power. The image wasn’t shown in an art gallery: It was on the front cover of the German weekly magazine, *AIZ*.

In many ways, “street art” goes all the way back to the caves of Lascaux where primitive men (and women) decorated their walls with pictures of horses, stags and bison. Back then, there was no Egyptian security force or Chinese intelligence officers to imprison the artists. There are now.

TACKLING POLITICS

The latest upsurge in revolutionary street art over the past year has rudely challenged many of the sacred cows in traditional art circles, paralleling the population’s political awakening. Ideas of what constitutes art, where art is shown and who makes art have all been shaken violently.

But the fight against the gallery-based model has been largely successful over the past year, and the traditional art world is now playing catch-up. More traditional, gallery-based art elites in the West have pushed back over the past decade — and this is no different in Egypt.

“We should remember that the Middle East is still conservative,” says Hafez. “Street art is not gallery art, but we are in a revolutionary situation, and it helped mobilize people. There was fabulous graffiti art, and personally, I think change is impending.” He adds: “I have learned a lot from the younger generation like Ganzeer.”

Ganzeer agrees, and says he believes the traditional sectors of the art world in Egypt have shot themselves in the foot by not showing more enthusiasm for the new generation. “I think the majority of the traditional art elite have proven the inability of their art to speak or relate to society via their inability to artistically engage in the revolution,” he says. “Many may have engaged as citizens and protested just like everybody else, but few have been able to engage artistically.”

The interface of politics and art has always been a tense one, with some of the more conservative elements in the art world accusing political art of being “agit-prop.” They argue that when you engage directly with politics, you deplete your sophistication. But things are changing.

“There is a very reactionary strand in the art world that says that you shouldn’t make work that’s overtly political,” says Peter Kennard (who, in the spirit of full disclosure, also happens to be my father), a senior lecturer in photography at the Royal College of Art in London, and one of the United



DAVID HOLLENBACH.COM

recently had a gallery show in London, but the 39-year-old’s main work is stenciling windows on concrete slabs slung out on the street, turning them into drab housing estates. “Life is a reflection of the circumstances I live in,” he says. “Whatever happens to me I will try to transport into art.”

Ganzeer feels something similar: “I feel the core purpose of creative arts lies in its social relevance.”

BEYOND POST-MODERN IRONY

Street art has captured the imagination of the younger generation of artists in the West over the past decade, led by British artist Banksy. But while the anonymous Bristolian has garnered much of the attention, there is now a dedicated phalanx of scribblers working alongside him — and their ranks have ballooned and “globalized” over the past year.

of global events through their art. They are not seeking to engage with the world retrospectively but as part of ongoing struggles hoping to bring about real, tangible change.

In this sense, it is not just the venue that has changed — from the gallery to the street — but the content, too. “Before the revolution we were falling into clichés and trying to express things between brackets,” says Khaled Hafez, a prominent Egyptian artist in the traditional gallery setting. “But since 9/11, more and more political issues are being expressed in art installation practices. The Arab Spring has really accelerated that.”

The direct engagement with societal issues in this way is not wholly new in the art world. It relates back to the work of the Russian Constructivists, such as Aleksander Rodchenko and El Lissitzky, who wanted to make an art of constructed abstract ele-

Continued on page 18

Docu-py Wall Street

Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America

BY WRITERS FOR THE 99%
OR BOOKS, 2011

This Changes Everything

EDITED BY SARAH VAN GELDER AND
THE STAFF OF YES! MAGAZINE
BERRETT-KOEHLER PUBLISHERS,
2011

Occupy: Scenes from Occupied America

CONTENT BY THE OCCUPY! GAZETTE
VERSO, 2011

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is at a crossroads. It used to live in plazas and parks and gave voice to rambling general assemblies about the troubling triumvirate of race, class and gender. Now, OWS is more diffuse. A series of insta-books have been published to make sense of this transformation. The Arab Spring bloomed into the *indignados* of the European summer and then what might be termed an American Fall. In July, the anti-consumerist magazine *Adbusters* put out a call to “bring a tent” to protest Wall Street. In September, instead of taking Wall Street, a small band of activists did set up camp in a nondescript public-private park named after a real estate company chairman. No one noticed.

I went to Zuccotti Park on Oct. 14 at 5:30 a.m. A throng of thousands ringed the park in a show of force to prevent the City from clearing the plaza under the pretext of unsanitary conditions. A mic check then echoed, “We received notice from the owners of Zuccotti Park and they are postponing the cleaning.” Billionaire Mayor Bloomberg blinked and we won.

A great retelling of the scene appears in *Occupying Wall Street: The Inside Story of an Action that Changed America*, replete with social media anecdotes and chants of “We are the 99%” — now familiar associations with the Occupy movement.

“Something happened in September 2011 so unexpected that no politician or pundit saw it coming,” reads the introduction to *This Changes Everything*. Prior to Occupy, the Tea Party crashed Democratic elected officials’ town hall meetings and turned them into “town hell meetings” with asinine rage to keep the government’s hands off of Medicare. Budget deficits were the new bogeyman. Banks nearly collapsed global capitalism and were rewarded with bailouts while we — and we did not even know who “we” were yet — were told to tighten our belts. And then it happened. The American Left reared its head and breathed new life. We learned we



Occupiers in Zuccotti Park, renamed Liberty Square during the occupation, on Oct. 5.

were the 99%. And we were powerful.

POPULIST AWAKENING

Many essays use words like “awakened” to describe what happened. Americans have opened up about their personal struggles on wear-the-99percent.tumblr.com, eliciting sympathy and, more importantly, solidarity. Thus far, OWS’s biggest influence has been on the national dialogue about gross inequality. It has successfully framed economic struggle in brief but eloquent phraseology, nay, mathematics — the 99% versus the 1%.

The literary journal *N+1* and Verso books published a compilation of essays, tweets and texts (*Occupy: Scenes from Occupied America*) from their excellent *Occupy! Gazette* series. Highlights include Žižek’s excoriation “Don’t Fall in Love With Yourself,” which starts: “We are all losers, but the true losers are down there on Wall Street.” The *Occupy! Gazette*’s strong point is artwork but *N+1* has not published another edition since mid-December.

Another *Occupy: Scenes from Occupied America* hit is Rebecca Solnit’s essay on violence, anarchism and diversity of tactics. “The euphemism for violence is ‘diversity of tactics’...But diversity does not mean that anything goes,” Solnit writes. Violence’s role in Occupy’s narrative cannot be overstated — it drove the media into a frenzy while “white shirts” suddenly entered our lexicon and Americans became familiar with pepper spray. Nathan Schneider’s piece on diversity of tactics in *This Changes Everything* explores why traditional forms of civil disobedience aren’t well suited to Occupy. Schneider writes, “While those in the civil rights movement could sit in the wrong part of a segregated bus, the occupiers at Liberty Plaza can’t exactly flout campaign finance laws, or laws regarding the regulation of banks.”

Pizza box protest signs about student debt and being laid off were ubiquitous in Zuccotti, but the white middle-class’ Great Recession was already an unbearable depression for African-Americans and Latinos throughout the country.

Each book features powerful

stories of people of color getting involved to make OWS’s declaration of beliefs more representative. For example, the People of Color working group here in New York led to organizing efforts in Harlem and the Bronx.

Without their valuable organizing work, the movement would not be as strong.

FUTURE OF OCCUPY

There is little discussion on Occupy’s future in these books. Last fall, occupy had encampments in many places, but police are moving to close the movement’s remaining redoubts, including the occupation in New Haven, Conn.

Holding ground as a long-term tactic is most likely over, and Occupy needs a 2.0. Many occupiers spent the winter taking over foreclosed homes, staging actions against banks and participating in occupations in their own neighborhoods. And it is now time for community organizing groups to step in and carry the load through the elections this fall.

But whether these efforts will lead to the same level of notoriety that Occupy reached last fall remains to be seen.

There is certainly reason to worry about Occupy. Noted left intellectuals, including Chris Hedges and David Graeber, are grappling with the friction between police confrontations and the need to be strategic, while others worry that slight economic improvements will cause middle-class support for Occupy to atrophy.

Occupy is making good on its promise of an American Spring. Unions and community groups are sponsoring a series of workshops training activists in direct action, titled “Spring training for the 99%.” However, I wish Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*, had examined Occupy as a brand in her essay in *This Changes Everything*. With the movement’s increasing popularity, Occupy is becoming an attitude and a brand as much as it is a movement — hopefully this broad banner will continue to galvanize action against corporate abuses.

—BENNETT BAUMER

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MINIST THEORY

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From Star-Gazers To Navel-Gazers

BY ALAKANANDA MOOKERJEE

Had Nicholas Copernicus owned an iPad, or Tycho Brahe, an iPhone, they would never have discovered, respectively, that the Earth revolved around the sun, or that comets were not a meteorological phenomenon. They would have been too busy looking down to look up at the heavens, let alone ruminate about our position in the cosmos.

Human thinking has traditionally been geocentric and anthropocentric. One might have imagined that the advent of modern technology would have catapulted us to higher planes. Au contraire, it has made us more egocentric than ever. Where we once believed our bluish rock to be at the center of the universe, we now rejoice in the perception that we, each one of us, are individual axes around which all matter spins.

After all, the very ukase of the Digital Age is, "What are you up to?" It pleases us to think that the 140-character twaddle we issue carries the weight of an emperor's edict. It inflates our ego to know that we command the loyalty — however fickle — of a flock of devotees.

The world comes to us filtered through pieces of software called apps. Indeed, who looks up at the sky anymore, even if it is to see roiling storm clouds gathering to pour rain? "There's an app for that."

The immaterial universe, as tech folks know it to be, is expanding with eyeball-popping alacrity. The volume of digital content should hit 1.8 zettabytes this year. An astronomical figure, fuelled by our compulsive need to generate more bits, will only grow bigger, faster.

By comparison, the strides we have made in space exploration have been miniscule. According

to a recent report in the *New York Times*, "If the Earth were in Orlando, and the closest star system, Alpha Centauri, were in Los Angeles, NASA's two Voyager spacecraft, the most distant man-made objects, have traveled just one mile."

The cramming of a galaxy of both worthwhile and worthless information into our portable doodads has ironically collapsed our mind's horizons to a size no bigger

lets and e-readers appeared on the scene, that technology got so addictive, holding us in its shiny thrall as if it were a beguiling sea nymph. Never before has it grabbed so much of our attention, for so long.

Last December, CNN's Fareed Zakaria reported that the world had squandered 200,000 years playing the popular iPhone game, "Angry Birds." In May 2011 alone, Facebook gobbled up 53 billion minutes of Americans' time.

In the past, one owned a robust, sedentary, rotary-dial telephone. It may have been a clunky contraption and produced a somewhat crackly sound, but, it did grant us the cranial freedom, which our 21st century phones have robbed us of. Petite and peripatetic as they are, they possess us, with a hold so tenacious that we have lost a very innate desire: to look around us.

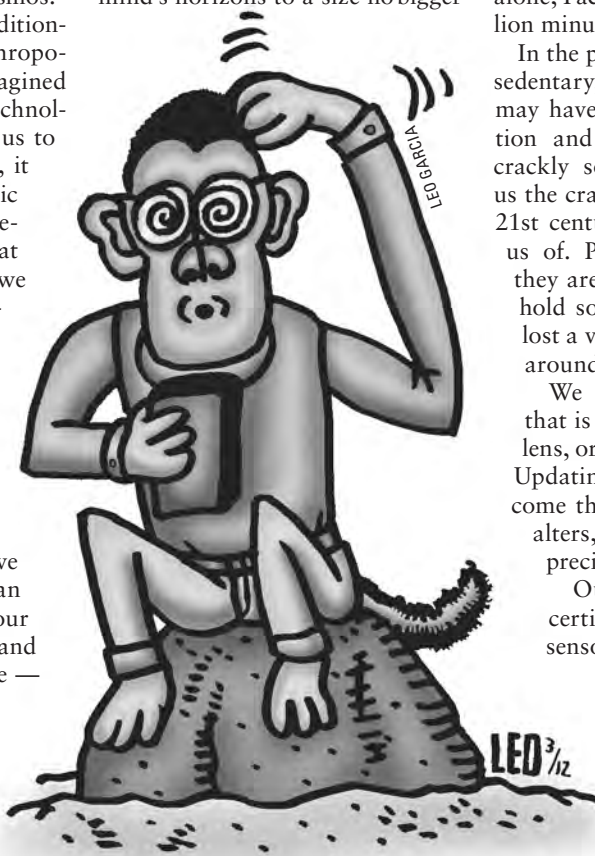
We seem to relish nothing that is not mediated by either a lens, or a web service, or an app. Updating our statuses has become the central activity, which alters, nay, diminishes, our appreciation of the moment.

Our hand-held gadgets certify the very reality of our sensory experiences.

Humankind has evolved from stooping and trudging with a lumbering gait, to being erect, with necks and spines held vertical. Now, with sloped necks, we walk distract-

edly along sidewalks, ride up elevators, shuffle through grocery store aisles. We go through our daily grind, in essence, cut off from the outside environment.

We have a voluptuous admiration for technology. Yet, who knows? The makers of our hand-held fixtures may have triggered a devolutionary cycle that will bend us lower and lower until we crawl on all fours again.



than the touchscreens we wipe, because everything we need is inside them.

Ever since Alexander Graham Bell gave us the gift of the curmudgeonly charming telephone, telecommunication gadgets have progressively shrank in size. Miniaturization, doubtless, is the trend of the future.

But, it was not until the web 2.0-spawned smart phones, tab-

The Arab Spring captivated the planet, but in Libya the New World Order had other plans.

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Rivera Returns

"DIEGO RIVERA: MURALS FOR THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART"
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If legendary Mexican muralist Diego Rivera had, like most painters, worked on canvas instead of on buildings and walls, then maybe he could have airmailed his paintings to the Museum of Modern Art for his 1931 exhibition, rather than hastily creating a brand-new collection of work. Further, if he hadn't chosen to create this new work on portable chunks of wall — squares of iron, steel and plaster — maybe these paintings wouldn't weigh hundreds of pounds apiece, requiring dedicated teams of laborers to transport them from gallery to gallery. And, if Rivera's masterworks hadn't been locked to particular sites, then maybe *Man at the Crossroads*, his mural at Rockefeller Center, wouldn't have been decimated at the Rockefellers' behest. But, this is all silly talk. It was exactly these aspects of Rivera's work and life — the outsized heroism, the weightiness and the desire to be rooted within particular places and periods — that has kept his art relevant for the more than a half-century since his death.

"Diego Rivera: Murals for The

Museum of Modern Art" brings five of the eight "portable murals" that Rivera created from 1931 to 1932 back to MoMA, along with auxiliary works and historical artifacts. *Agrarian Leader Zapata* (1931) shows the famed revolutionary general, solemnly leading a group of working men over the slain body of a plantation owner. *The Uprising* (1931) shows a raging wave of workers fending off a line of thug-gish guards; the setting is somewhat generic, but red flags in the background posit the work as a scene from a socialist rebellion. New Yorkers may feel a bit too familiar with *Frozen Assets* (1931-32), which juxtaposes the glittering New York skyline with the marginalized masses responsible for its construction. The piece reminds us that many famous New York skyscrapers were built with cheap, Depression-era labor. Meanwhile, *The Rivals* (1931), a colorful work on canvas (he did

paint on canvas sometimes) projects the sort of airy slightness that the murals seem precisely built to avoid. A 1927 sketchbook of drawings depicting home life and public celebrations in Moscow is an unexpected exhibition highlight.



The Uprising, Diego Rivera, 1931.

Looked at in the present day, Rivera's paintings possess a boldness that also creates some vexing contextual complications — the macho hubris that makes his art so great also dates his work considerably. By now, the visceral, surreal, proto-feminist paintings of Rivera's

wife, Frida Kahlo, have outpaced her husband's murals in terms of fame and influence. Rivera was a Marxist, creating images meant to champion and galvanize popular struggle. He populated complex scenes with simplified, cartoon-ish people, always with a sense of action and movement.

He also produced small works for wealthy art dealers, and received big commissions from major industrialists and powerful elites: painting beautiful, epic struggles inside San Francisco's stock exchange and Mexico's National Palace (controversy over his benefactors led to Rivera's expulsion from the Mexican Communist Party).

In January, a group of Occupy protesters staged an action at the MoMA exhibit, calling attention to the museum's corporate sponsorship and reading aloud from Rivera

and André Breton's "Manifesto for an Independent Revolutionary Art" ("The independence of art — for the revolution. The revolution — for the complete liberation of art!") As in 1931, the Museum of Modern Art is still largely funded by the Rockefeller family. The ways that capital and power shape artistic discourse should certainly be exposed, but did Rivera really oppose this commingling of art and industry? After all, it was how his paintings were made.

The current exhibition includes some sketches and clandestine photos of *Man at the Crossroads* — which are all that remains of the ill-fated mural. The piece was meant as a celebration of progress, including (in no small part) the advancements of Soviet communism. The 1934 destruction of *Man at the Crossroads* helped cement Rivera's status as a revolutionary rebel, but what does it tell us that members of the wealthy elite such as the Rockefellers and the Fords were willing to even consider having such an artist outfit their buildings forever? Rivera's legacy highlights both the power and powerlessness of radical art. That Occupiers recognized Rivera's paintings as a rallying point speaks volumes — as with so much Depression-era political art, the basic problems of inequality and exploitation haven't changed all that much. The walls still stand.

—MIKE NEWTON

Little Big Man

The Island President
DIRECTED BY JON SHENK
SAMUEL GOLDWYN FILMS, 2012
FILM FORUM
209 W. HOUSTON ST.
MARCH 28 – APRIL 10

The release of *The Island President*, Jon Sherk's documentary profile of Mohamed 'Anni' Nasheed, highlights one of the key David-versus-Goliath narratives in recent eco-politics. As president of the Maldives, a stretch of 2,000 tiny islands in the middle of the Indian Ocean that constitute the lowest-lying nation on earth and, in his words, "a crossover between paradise and paradise," Nasheed had become the most vocal and inspirational advocate for the containment of global warming since his election in 2008. Then, in a sad turn of events, a coup d'état forced him out of office on Feb. 7 of this year.

Until Nasheed's election, the dictatorship of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom had brutally suppressed freedom of expression and assembly since 1978. Educated in England, Nasheed returned home in 1989 and became a leader in the resistance movement against Gay-

oom's pervasive corruption and human rights abuses. He was arrested 12 times, tortured twice and kept in solitary confinement for 18 months. Upon his release, he went into exile for fear of death. The devastation caused by a tsunami in 2004 ironically led to a reversal of fortune for the country when the international community demanded political reform as a condition for much-needed aid. Nasheed returned, and heading the Maldivian Democratic Party, he beat Gayoom in the 2008 presidential elections.

Most of the film traces Nasheed mobilizing his cabinet and sensitizing the world at large to the climate change that, because of dramatically rising oceans, is jeopardizing the future of all 39 members of the Alliance of Small Island States. (Wider-ranging repercussions follow; eroding

shorelines and contaminated freshwater supplies are two disastrous consequences of the encroaching waves.) As the president and his team work up to the 2009 climate summit in Copenhagen, the viewer



Mohamed 'Anni' Nasheed, former president of the Maldives.

sympathizes with his frustration with the political negotiations. The atmospheric CO₂ level of 350 parts per million necessary to keep the sea water from warming fur-

ther and eventually washing over islands already seems a utopian number. Preemptive strategies give way to means of adaptation. Nasheed's hopes for the Copenhagen agreement devolve from a document that could potentially save the planet to one that would provide the Maldives with funding to resist the fate of Atlantis.

The Island President is shot like a news special and charts a rather perfunctory course between Nasheed's individual commitment and public office. Yet, his appeal sufficiently makes up for any lack of imaginative conception on Sherk's part. Nasheed turned his country's plight into a role of responsibility for mounting a campaign that makes the fight against climate change a tangible—if not sexy—project, with himself as the poster boy. Ir-

repressibly jovial and charming, the diminutive president appears driven by a modest yet visionary determination. This is epitomized when, in a publicity stunt that is at once jocular and eerie, he invites news media to an underwater cabinet meeting. While the Maldives are striving to be the first carbon-neutral nation wholly powered by renewable energy, the overall debate around global warming is shifting from prevention to damage control.

From Kyoto to Copenhagen to Durban last December, lofty statements of shared concern about the greenhouse effect kept trumping the implementation of binding measures to limit carbon emissions. In "Washed Away," the cover story of this month's *ABA Journal*, Kristin Choo raises the grim and unprecedented legal question of how island nations will be able "to preserve their statehood, claims to resources and national identity when they have no actual physical homeland." As for Nasheed, whose current situation remains precarious, hopefully *The Island President* will help generate support and intervention to reinstate him, so he can keep the Maldives from becoming "a country of environmental refugees" and set an example for the rest of us in the process.

—KENNETH CRAB

Global Art

Continued from page 14

Kingdom's most prominent political artists. "You can imply, but that's also to do with the art world being about selling work." He adds: "Our understanding of art has

become over-aestheticized and I think the only thing that can change that, which is changing it, is the pressure of crisis in the world."

It is not just the art world that is fearful of this new army of artistic and political revolutionaries. Centers of unaccountable power over the past year have demonstrated a fanatical aversion to creative thought and production.

In Syria, in August, the most famous political cartoonist in the country, Ali Ferzat, was abducted in the streets of Damascus and beaten. "We will break your hands so that you'll stop drawing," the thugs told him, before doing exactly that. He was dumped by the roadside. "This is just a warning," they told him.

In China, Ai Weiwei, the iconic artist whose work has taken on themes of repression in his home country, was arrested by the authorities and held incommunicado for months on spurious charges, which still stand.

While the process has accelerated over the past year because of the volume of artistic dissent, this fear is nothing new. In Honduras, the first two people arrested after the 2009 coup were the President Manuel Zelaya and cartoonist Allan Macdonald, who had published cartoons in support of the deposed president.

In 2003, the U.S. government asked that a tapestry version of Picasso's anti-war masterpiece *Guernica* on permanent display at the United Nations, be covered up with a blue curtain when Colin Powell made his notorious error-filled speech about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the need for invasion.

It seems counter-intuitive. Why would the most powerful country in the world care about a piece of art decorating a room at the United Nations? And why would the world's newest superpower care about one man making piles of seeds in a studio in Beijing?

"Artists, especially cartoonists, can make it easy for everyone to understand a difficult political statement," says Carlos Latuff, a Brazilian cartoonist whose pictures have become an accompaniment to uprisings all over the world. "We have the ability to make fun of dictators and, of course, dictators are not fond of humor."

There is some debate as to what the term "street art" actually means. It is an appellation that describes a genre of art rather than work that is done outside. But Swoon, one of the few women in the field, thinks this is wrong. "For me, if I'm working outside, then fine, call it street art, but if I'm working inside, then it's an installation," she says. "For me it doesn't seem useful."

Many practitioners believe the label is another way of demeaning an art form that is encroaching on a nervous elite. "Sometimes it seems that people need a name for something, if they don't know it by a name they can't grasp it," says Evol. "I dislike the expression."

PROTEST ART IN THE UNITED STATES

In the United States, the Occupy movement has been synonymous with sign-making and art installations from the beginning. The first thing you noticed when arriving at Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan was that

everyone had their own signs, some scrawled on pizza boxes, some professionally printed photomontages. There was an evident need to creatively express dissatisfaction rather than just shout about it.

Some suggest that because traditional channels of political discourse in the United States have broken down so catastrophically that it is only through art that sense can be made of the crisis.

Max Nova, a 25-year-old from Colorado, is behind some of the most iconic art pieces associated with Occupy Wall Street. The co-founder of Dawn of Man, a production company based in New York, he has done art for years, but says the Occupy movement has given his work a directly political angle for the first time.

"Personally, I have been inspired," he says. "Not just to be political, but to do work that is directly focused on making a change, spreading awareness about important issues." He's not alone either. "I have definitely seen a lot more political and street

touch me with a 10-foot pole," she says. Strangely, a lot of street artists report museums, rather than galleries, being more open to their work.

Swoon spent part of 2011 working in a small village just outside of Port-au-Prince in Haiti and built a community center and a small house.

Since the earthquake struck in January 2010, leaving a whole society traumatized, there has been one artist who has been out decorating Port-au-Prince with beautiful murals and graffiti pieces as a way of expressing his own hopes and fears for the country.

"I was never a big fan of politics," says Jerry Rosembert, but he adds that the extent of the trauma in Haiti means he has had to engage. "I am obliged to commentate on my country because things are bad, and for me, it is the best way of giving my ideas worth and value."

His art is just another way of communicating a message — a cry to be heard in a



TRUTH TO POWER: "Tantawi is Mubarak" reads this street portrait from Cairo.

art lately," he adds.

In November, the Dawn of Man projected words and images — including the Occupy movement's "99%" slogan — on the side of the Verizon building as protestors marched across the Brooklyn Bridge. They projected from a private residence, but in the United States, they also have to worry about a crackdown by authorities. "We had cops looking into the apartment, but they couldn't get in without a warrant," he says.

"It is interesting how art has become a fundamental factor," says Nova. "If you look at working groups in New York OWS, the arts and culture one is vastly larger than the other groups. A lot of artists find themselves drawn to this."

New York-based Swoon gave a piece to Occupy Wall Street and planned to paint on some tents in Zuccotti Park before they were removed in the city's controversial eviction.

"I became politically aware at the same time I started working outside," she says. "The whole thinking process dovetailed with going outside, because once you start working outside, then the whole conversation about public and private space and the commons [begins]."

She says she engages in a "creative transformative art process" where, by enacting the thought process, you are also creating. But she's still locked out of the traditional U.S. art scene. "Galleries in New York don't

society rendered silent by a natural disaster. "Certain people do this their way sometimes in the newspapers or on the TV, but the graffiti, this represents me more, and this is a type of commentary I enjoy a lot."

The Art Spring has stretched to South America, too, with the Chilean student protests inspiring a surge in graffiti and cartoons on the streets of Santiago and other cities. Latuff went to Chile during the protests and says he saw art students and passersby producing cartoons and paintings on the walls in support of the uprising to an extent he'd never experienced in Latin America.

The cross-border pollination of art over the past year has been huge. Latuff is in high demand in Egypt and across other parts of the Middle East. Even before the January 25 protest that began the Egyptian revolution, Latuff was receiving requests for illustrations from protesters.

"This was pretty amazing," he says. "I usually produce stuff and it will be used, but this was different — they were making specific requests. They felt cartoons and art could help their campaign." He says activists in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain have all sent him photos of his cartoons being held up at rallies.

FREEDOM OUTSIDE OF THE GALLERY MODEL

The explosion of technology and social me-

dia has been a vital corollary to this movement. Facebook and Twitter have not just allowed activists to organize, but also provided a key tool to disseminate pictures. They have accelerated this "democratization" of art by making it much easier to circumvent the gallery, which had previously been a prerequisite to building an audience.

"Especially in past year I have been using Twitter and Facebook to spread the artworks, which has played an important role in getting them out," says Latuff. "If I upload a single cartoon it takes 15 minutes to get sometimes 3,000 hits, depending on the issue. It's amazing how you put up a single cartoon and it spreads like a fire."

Moving outside of the gallery also changes the audience. In a revolutionary situation, the aim is often to reach as many people as possible. Street art is in some way inherently political, in a way gallery art isn't. The people who see it have no choice in the matter — unlike those who venture into a gallery on a Sunday afternoon. Now, the wall is the gallery, and the audience has multiplied exponentially.

"I use the space for everyone who is living or passing by there, I'm naturally speaking to anyone passing by," says Evol. "No one asked me to do it, so I can't ask for a reaction in a certain way."

Krzysztof Wodiczko is a Polish artist who teaches at Harvard University and is famous for his projections, including a swastika on the South African Embassy in London during apartheid. He has used his art to further the causes he believes in for the past 40 years.

But he says he's never been this excited. "In '68 there was legitimate criticism that art was being too conservative in its choice of media, and therefore its capacity to reach those who really needed reaching. Artists were indulging in some posters, but what was needed was something to engage the mass media."

Now, he says, "the whole cultural geography of resistance benefits from mobile communication. Even though authorities will try to censor it, there will be ways around it with other inventions."

Wodiczko draws a distinction between two different types of political art — the direct and indirect. "My experience in Poland under the previous regime was that because it had this image of an open system, or a system with a human face, that transformed itself into more of democracy, it was in fact, very scared of dissent that may contradict this. So artists were allowed to speak, to deal with politics, as long as they were doing this indirectly, in a metaphoric way. Once they move into more of a direct link, or people recognize them as political activists, at the same time as artists, then they will be in jail or prevented from speaking or communicating."

Latuff is an example of this. He is banned from Israel because he has made cartoons critical of the government's treatment of Palestinians. In Brazil, he has been arrested three times for producing his pieces. "I believe in what Che Guevara called internationalism, solidarity with people," he says. "If I've got a skill, I think it's necessary to put this skill at the service of the social movement. The artist cannot ignore art as a tool for change. Especially not now."

Matt Kennard is a London-based freelance journalist. His work has appeared in *The Financial Times*, *The (UK) Guardian*, *Salon* and *The Chicago Tribune*, among others.

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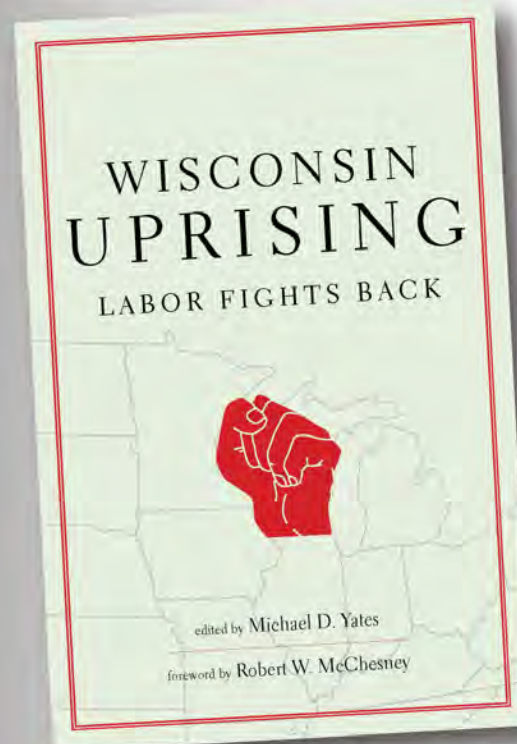
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